

FOR SECOND WEEK

Police repress convention protests

By LeiLani Dowell
St. Paul, Minn.

Despite an onslaught of police terror and repression, protesters from across the country used a variety of tactics to march on the Republican National Convention here on Sept. 1. A mass march organized by the Coalition to March on the RNC and Stop the War was followed by youthful street actions to denounce the Republican policies of endless imperialist war and sweeping attacks on workers.

In an escalation of tactics used at the Democratic National Convention in Denver a week earlier, Minnesota police began the repression against RNC protesters days before the march. The cops raided community kitchens, meeting spaces and protesters' homes; handcuffed and harassed activists; confiscated political literature; and arrested at least three people on bogus "conspiracy to riot" charges.

Despite this intimidation, organizers remained determined to move forward with what would turn out to be a highly successful, massive march as well as direct actions on Labor Day, Sept. 1.

Three views of Obama 7-8

Some 30,000 attended a rally that included representatives of the American Indian Movement; ANSWER Coalition; Appeal for Redress Campaign; Coalition to March on the RNC and Stop the War; Code Pink; Colombia Action Network; Green Party; Latinos Against War; Palestine Solidarity Group; Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign; Students for a Democratic Society; Teamsters 743; Troops Out Now Coalition; United for Peace and Justice; Venezuela Solidarity Network; Veterans for Peace; Welfare Rights Committee; and Women Against Military Madness.

The diverse crowd, led by the Iraq Veterans Against the War, then marched to the Xcel Center, site of the Republican convention, and back to the State Capitol for a closing rally. Various contingents included low-income people, youth and students, immigrant rights activists, labor, Palestine and Colombia solidarity activists, an anti-capitalist bloc and an anti-climate-change group.

While Republican Party leaders shied away from the

Continued to page 7

THIS LABOR DAY— IMMIGRANT RIGHTS ARE WORKERS' RIGHTS!

- Anti-fascist fights deportation 2
- ICE arrests hundreds in Mississippi 3
- Fighting just to get paid 3



WW PHOTO: GLORIA RUBAC

WHAT THE CUBAN 5 DEFEND

- Socialism=prowess in Olympics
- Socialism=saving lives during Gustav
- It's time to defend the Cuban 5! 11

STOP FORECLOSURES NOW!

- Michigan campaign dogs senator 4

HURRICANE GUSTAV

- Again, New Orleans 5
- Death and hope in Caribbean 11

NO WAR ON IRAN!

- Sept. 27 protests 9

An appreciation of Gen. Giap

10



Police repress protesters outside Republican National Convention.

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Victor Toro v. U.S. Immigration Court

Chilean who fought Pinochet now fights deportation

By Teresa Gutierrez
New York

A Chilean who was a leader in the movement against the bloody dictatorship of Gen. Augusto Pinochet faces deportation from the U.S. But on Aug. 15, Víctor Toro turned his second appearance before Judge Paul Defonzo of U.S. Immigration Court in Manhattan into a lesson in history.

Attorney Carlos Moreno submitted a complete application for political asylum for Toro. In addition, the lawyer turned in 47 key documents in support of the application. Moreno says about the August day in court: “U.S.-Chilean history came to life in the courtroom.”

The Border Patrol had detained Toro in July 2007 while he was on an Amtrak train that stopped in Rochester, N.Y. His arrest can only be described as racial anti-immigrant profiling. He was incarcerated in Cayuga County Jail with bail set at \$5,000.

Toro is undocumented because he was forced to flee Chile in the 1970s as a result of his political work against the U.S.-orchestrated fascist coup there. As a young man in Chile, he was one of the founders of the inspiring and militant Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR).

On Sept. 11, 1973, Pinochet led one of the bloodiest coups in Latin America with the connivance of the U.S. government and U.S. corporations making big profits there. The coup led to the roundup of tens of thousands of Chilean workers, students and campesinos [agricultural workers]. Many were brutally tortured and then killed.

The fascist coup was carried out in an attempt to stop the progressive and pro-socialist government of Salvador Allende, much beloved by the Chilean masses. Allende was killed defending the Presidential Palace on the first day of the coup, a day never to be forgotten by Chileans or revolutionaries anywhere.

Victim of anti-immigrant witch hunt

Moreno premised the submission of the application for political asylum with a brief statement regarding the Sept. 11 coup. He described Toro’s political involvement, describing him as a “significant figure” in the opposition to the Pinochet dictatorship. He pointed out that Toro’s political work has been widely documented, including in the book “Small Earthquake in Chile” by Sir Alistair Horne, and that he has been called “one of the best known advocates for immigrants and other dispossessed people in New York City.” (New York Times, July 11, 2007)

Moreno stated: “It has long been established that the U.S. supported the 1973 coup against Allende and provided financial support to fascist groups engaged in destabilizing actions against Allende. Congressional records reveal as much. The evidence we submitted in court today documents U.S. intervention and points out that such intervention is relevant to Víctor Toro’s claim for political asylum in the country that made it impossible for him to remain in his.”

Moreno also submitted to the court documents related to Operation Condor, an infamous and bloody campaign of political repression in the 1970s devised by Washington for Latin America and carried out by murderous dictators it supported.

Moreno writes: “Operation Condor was responsible for the murders of dozens of people, including Edgardo

Enrique and Jorge Fuentes, both members of MIR, the same organization to which Víctor belonged. No leap of logic is needed to conclude that Víctor was a target of this operation.”

In the courtroom on the day of Toro’s hearing was his long-time companion, activist Nieves Ayress, and their daughter, Rosita Toro. Both Ayress and Víctor Toro are staunch members and organizers of the New York May 1st Coalition for Immigrant and Worker Rights, La Peña del Bronx and other organizations.

Ayress says: “If Víctor is deported back to Chile, not only will it break up our family here in the U.S. He runs the risk of being assassinated. Much of the Pinochet regime remains present in Chile today.” She points out that the Chilean government “has records that state that Víctor is dead. How can a dead person be deported? What would happen to him as soon as his feet touch Chilean soil?” She fears the worst.

Growing demands for political asylum

Judge Defonzo set a hearing date for Feb. 11, 2009, at which time a final decision will be made regarding Toro’s case. According to Moreno, after all testimony is given and closing arguments are made, the judge will issue a decision the same day, either granting or denying Toro’s application for asylum and related forms of relief.

This means that the movement to defend Víctor Toro and grant him political asylum must step up its work before the February hearing.

Moreno points out: “It is critical that all progressive people here and throughout the country express their support for Víctor Toro’s claim for asylum. Progressive people have been under attack in the U.S. for the past few years and immigrants are particularly vulnerable to these attacks, as they were in the 1920s when two Italian immigrants, Niccolò Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, were targeted for prosecution and ultimately executed on highly questionable evidence.

“We believe that progressive immigrants are singled out for repression in the U.S. Víctor Toro has devoted his life to struggle for justice wherever he goes. He has never needed our support more than now.”

Many messages of solidarity were received before the August hearing. One came from Eni Lestari in Hong Kong, chairperson of the International Migrants Alliance. She pointed out that Toro “is a legitimate political refugee. His record of being a political leader fighting against the U.S.-supported Augusto Pinochet regime is known to the world. His persecution by this government and placing him in the top 13 most-wanted people by Pinochet should serve as strong grounds for granting him political refugee status.”

Progressives and revolutionaries in the U.S. and throughout the world are urged to demand political asylum for Víctor Toro. Letters can be sent by e-mail to may1@leftshift.org and more information can be downloaded from www.may1.info or by writing to the law offices of Carlos Moreno, 352 Seventh Ave., Suite 1204, New York, NY 10001.

Donations to help defray legal costs are urgently needed and can be sent to Moreno at his law office. □



This week ...



★ In the U.S.

Police repress convention protests	1
Chilean who fought Pinochet now fights deportation . . .	2
Lesson of ICE arrests in Laurel, Miss.	3
Workers fight to get paid.	3
HIV crisis worse than previously reported	3
Activists demand hearings on moratorium bill	4
Gov’t tries to sneak in anti-choice rules	4
On the picket line	4
Gustav and New Orleans.	5
Protest denounces destruction of affordable housing . . .	5
Cynthia McKinney speaks on war and racism.	6
Vets, immigrants protest at DNC	6
Obama’s speech in Denver	7
A call for Black unity, action.	8
Black and blues at the DNC	8
Anti-war forces call Sept. 27 day of action	9
Floridians march to stop war on Iran	9

★ Around the world

Vo Nguyen Giap at 97	10
Olympic prowess	11
Poverty, not Gustav, brings deaths to Caribbean	11

★ Editorials

Biden and Palin	10
Long live the DPRK!	10

★ Noticias En Español

Un viaje por derechos inmigratorios	12
Abogad@s Colombian@s buscan solidaridad.	12

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Lesson of ICE arrests in Laurel, Miss.

Attacks on immigrants hurt all workers

By Teresa Gutierrez

At the very same time that the Democratic Party was making great promises to the people of this country at its convention in Colorado, the largest immigration raid to date was taking place in Laurel, Miss.

On Aug. 25, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) carried out another disgusting, racist raid as they pounced down on a Mississippi electrical equipment factory, Howard Industries.

Over 595 immigrants were arrested. Without delay, 475 workers were taken to a detention center in Jena, La., about 120 miles from Laurel.

Jena has been the site of a series of racist attacks against the Black community. In September 2006, three nooses were hung from a tree there after six Black students dared to sit under what was infamously known as “the white tree.”

The attacks ignited a massive movement for justice for the Jena 6, including one of the largest demonstrations against racism in decades.

Raids calculated to divide and conquer

Immigrant rights advocates feared that the workers in Laurel would face charges similar to those imposed on packinghouse workers after the despicable ICE raid in Postville, Iowa, in May of this year.

In Postville, workers were not charged with immigration violations but with identity theft—which is a felony, much more serious than any immigration violation.

However, as a result of the public outrage over the Postville raid, so far only a handful of the Laurel immigrants have been charged with identify theft. A handful too many.

And just like Postville, ICE prepared for the raid by booking large numbers of motel rooms. This led to activists alerting the movement to the raid before it occurred.

Howard Industries is currently the world’s largest manufacturer of distribution transformers. It is the largest employer in Laurel as well as in the state, employing about 4,000 workers statewide. Its net worth is \$1 billion. This year OSHA levied about \$193,000 in fines against Howard for 54 safety violations.

In 1997, under the constant drive of capitalism to expand, the company opened up Howard Technology Park in Ellisville, Miss.

The facility received heavy state subsidies, about \$30 million, but as of 2007 no tenants had moved in. The 5,000 jobs

promised by the computer division of the company in 1997 never materialized.

The Aug. 25 raid at Howard left a chill on the immigrant community, which is primarily Latin@. Immigrant and labor rights activists report that Latin@s are afraid to come out of their homes; stores and restaurants that cater to the Latin@ community are almost empty.

Some of the news surrounding the raid has been calculated to further divide U.S. and immigrant workers, especially the undocumented.

Television and newspaper accounts, both in English and Spanish, reported that the raid allegedly took place as a result of a tip to ICE from a union member. The union at the plant is the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers.

Telemundo, a major Spanish-language national television station, reported that some of the workers at the factory applauded when ICE rounded up the immigrants. It also reported that ICE separated Black workers in one area, white workers in another, and Latin@s in still another.

Mass movement needed

The news of the Laurel, Miss., raid is not all negative, however. The rumor that ICE raided the plant because of a tip from the union could be just that: a rumor. It could be totally bogus. Some news accounts report that the alleged call was made two years ago.

The fact is that Howard Industries has been in the midst of a union drive. It’s been a very progressive union drive, where organizers struggle to bring the immigrant workers, documented and undocumented, into the union.

African-American workers did applaud, but they did so when some of the Latin@ families held a protest in front of the plant Aug. 30 demanding the checks of the workers held in Jena. Black workers came out to shake the Latin@ families’ hands.

Many of the Howard workers, Black and white, came out to show their solidarity with the Latin@ families.

David Bacon, a progressive journalist who has written volumes on the conditions of immigrant workers, wrote in Truthout.org on Aug. 31: “Tensions between the company and union increased after the collective bargaining agreement expired at the beginning of August. According to one immigrant worker ... the union was asking for a wage increase of \$1.50 an hour and better vacation benefits. Company medical benefits are also an issue ... because family coverage costs over \$100 a week.

“Mississippi is a right-to-work state,” Bacon continues, “and labor contracts cannot require that workers belong to the union. Instead, unions must continually try to sign workers as members. To increase its ability to negotiate a contract, Local 1317 began making great efforts to sign up immigrant members.

“That’s when the plant was raided,” he notes.

What will it take?

Thousands of labor officials attended the Democratic National Convention. What were their thoughts on the raids at Laurel or Postville?

Both raids were callously anti-union. Was there an effort during the convention to at least pass a resolution condemning these anti-worker, racist raids? Was there an outcry for justice that maybe didn’t get covered in the news? Was this outcry stifled, like the protests outside the convention against war and for

immigrant rights?

The labor movement faces enormous problems as a profound capitalist economic crisis unfolds. The answer to these problems is staring us all in the face: focus on building solidarity among all workers, so they can better resist the onslaught of the bosses. That’s been the lesson behind every period of great labor struggle and gains.

There are many labor militants trying to do just that. As unions go out to celebrate Labor Day, their leaders need to know that unless they extend the hand of solidarity to all immigrant workers—documented and undocumented—and provide not just verbal support but material assistance to the countless activists who are working tirelessly and heroically, most without pay, to defend immigrant rights, the ruling class of this country and the captains of industry like those at Howard Industries will continue to win the war against all workers. □

Workers fight to get paid



Several months ago, the owner of La Pupusa Loca restaurant in Houston started making excuses for not paying the workers. Most of the unpaid workers just left and found other jobs, figuring they had no recourse. But four of the women decided to fight for the wages owed them. They contacted the Central American Resource Center (Centro de Recursos Centroamericanos—CRECEN), which demanded the owner pay the wages he owed the workers. He agreed and issued checks to the workers, but they bounced. The workers were owed almost \$3,000 each for hours they worked over a two-month period. After much negotiating, the workers

were paid most of the money owed them, but not all. The owner refused to pay the last \$300 owed each of them, so on Aug. 29, a press conference was held in front of the restaurant. Supported by CRECEN, Interfaith Worker Justice, and a number of religious and community leaders and activists, two of the workers (on the right in the photo) explained to the media how they had been cheated out of wages they had earned at the restaurant. The two are immigrants from El Salvador who had worked there for several years. They left hopeful that the pressure put on the owner would force him to finally pay the total amount owed.

—Report and photo by Gloria Rubac

HIV crisis worse than previously reported

By David Hoskins

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently announced that the number of HIV transmissions in the U.S. each year is significantly higher than previously reported. The CDC’s revision of its method for calculating HIV transmission rates paints a troubling picture of the government’s unwillingness to stem the spread of the virus, which causes AIDS. The CDC increased its estimate of new HIV transmission rates by 40 percent, to over 56,000 new cases each year.

AIDS activists have pointed out that the new numbers demonstrate the U.S. government is not marshalling the resources necessary to effectively counter the epidemic. The Community HIV/AIDS

Mobilization Project issued a statement saying, “This improved estimate means little if it does not serve as the spark to inflame our collective anger about the deadly neglect of an acute emergency.”

The revelation that transmission rates are drastically higher than previously claimed comes at the same time data from the National Health Interview Survey show the rate of HIV testing leveled off after 2001.

The effect of the government’s failure to provide the funding and services necessary for HIV prevention and testing is compounded by the soaring cost of health care in the U.S. A recent Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality survey found that the cost of health insurance premiums more than doubled between 1996 and 2006.

Workers now pay an average of \$2,890 a year for family coverage, up from \$1,275 in 1996. The share for single person coverage increased from \$342 a year to \$788 over the same period.

Government inaction potentially puts millions of lives at risk of HIV transmission and even death, especially when the costs associated with health care deny those living with HIV access to the quality treatment they need to prolong their lives and delay the onset of AIDS.

AIDS: an epidemic of oppression and bigotry

The AIDS epidemic has long affected the nationally oppressed as well as men who have sex with other men. In the 1980s gay and bisexual men were at such

a disproportionately high risk of contracting HIV that AIDS was widely thought of as a homosexual disease.

Homophobia stopped President Ronald Reagan from acting to counter the disease until the epidemic was already widespread. It is estimated that by the time Reagan made his first public statement on AIDS in 1987, over 20,000 people, primarily gay and bisexual men, had already died. The only reason Reagan addressed the crisis at all was a mass backlash to government inaction initiated by a national gay-led grassroots movement.

During this same period it became apparent that AIDS had a disproportionate impact on the nationally oppressed, in addition to gay and bisexual men of all

Continued on page 9

Activists demand hearings on moratorium bill

By Kris Hamel
Detroit

Activists in Michigan with the Moratorium NOW! Coalition to Stop Foreclosures and Evictions have started a campaign to force state Sen. Randy Richardville to move a bill mandating a moratorium on housing foreclosures out of his committee. Richardville is chair of the Senate Banking and Financial Services Committee, where the bill, SB 1306, has lain dormant since its introduction last spring.

The coalition is demanding that Richardville convene a public hearing on Sept. 17. That's the day activists and foreclosure victims will be at the state Capitol in Lansing, Mich., for a mass demonstration to press for the law's passage by the Legislature. SB 1306 would place a two-year moratorium, or halt, on foreclosures and evictions by delaying the sheriff's sale or extending the redemption period on foreclosed homes.

The law would provide immediate relief to tens of thousands of working-class families around the state. Over 72,000 homes in the Detroit area alone are in foreclosure. One in every 137 homes in Michigan was subject to foreclosure during the second quarter of this year. (July 2008, RealtyTrac)

Organizers sent Richardville a certified letter requesting he immediately move the bill out of the banking committee and hold public hearings on the foreclosure crisis. When he failed to respond to their letter within seven days as requested, they held a protest Aug. 28 outside the senator's home in Monroe, Mich., about an hour south of Detroit.

They gathered in downtown Monroe outside the county courthouse, where a short rally was held after an afternoon of leafleting and outreach. Then they piled into vehicles for the two-mile drive to Richardville's residence. About 20 protesters converged on the home's front lawn, where they held a banner and signs demanding "Sen. Richardville—move on SB 1306 now!"



Protesters gather in Monroe, Mich., before picketing state Sen. Randy Richardville's home demanding he expedite a bill to stop foreclosures.

The senator's home on the Raisin River is situated on a busy road. Many motorists honked in support as they drove past the demonstration. Protesters chanted, "We want hearings now!" and "Moratorium now!" Several people from Monroe enthusiastically took part in the action.

During the demonstration, a delegation of coalition activists went to the home's front door to deliver another letter to Richardville demanding immediate public hearings. They knocked loudly, shouted his name and looked through the window but no one answered, so they left the letter in the door. Organizers believed the home was occupied at the time because two cars were parked in the side driveway.

Meanwhile, Richardville's father came on the scene and shortly thereafter officers from the Monroe Police Department and the Monroe County sheriff arrived, but they did not interfere with the demonstration.

During the ride back to Detroit after the action, coalition organizer and attorney Jerry Goldberg received a call from Richardville, who obviously had been at home during the protest. He stated he had just received the letter.

Goldberg told Workers World: "Richardville expressed dismay over the demonstration, but for the first time said he would consider hearings on the moratorium bill."

torium bill.

"Richardville said he didn't believe the moratorium or any proposal raised so far would provide a long-term solution to the foreclosure crisis. I told him this is precisely why a moratorium is needed, so that tens of thousands of people can stay in their homes while a solution is developed over time."

Goldberg continued: "I stressed to him that whatever his personal position on the bill, he has a duty to move this bill out of committee and let there be a genuine debate on this critical issue. I also pointed out to him the legal precedent for the moratorium, which he was unable to challenge."

An excellent video called "Randy & Me—Moratorium Now," by coalition organizer Alan Pollock, is available on YouTube. It highlights the letter delivery and scenes from the protest at Richardville's home. Other videos on the foreclosure moratorium struggle in Michigan can also be seen on YouTube.

To reserve a bus seat from Detroit to the Sept. 17 demonstration in Lansing, call 313-887-4344 or visit moratorium-mi.org. The cost is \$20; no one will be turned away for lack of funds. Donations can be sent to the Moratorium NOW! Coalition, 23 E. Adams, 4th floor, Detroit, MI 48226. □

ON THE PICKET LINE

by Sue Davis

Sanitation workers strike in Wisconsin

Garbage has been piling up in the six-county region around Milwaukee after 240 members of Teamsters Local 200 went on strike on Aug. 23. Accusing the company of coercing and intimidating the workers, the union filed a suit with the National Labor Relations Board charging unfair labor practices and failing to bargain in good faith. The company countersued. The workers' contract expired April 30. One of the sticking issues is that the company wants the workers to accept an "alternative" pension plan, meaning the bosses are trying to steal retirement money the workers have earned.

Victory for NYC restaurant workers

After two and a half years of organizing, the Restaurant Opportunities Center of New York announced a \$3.9 million victory for 250 workers in seven restaurants in New York City on June 20. In addition to being repaid for stolen tips and wages and compensated for sexual harassment, the workers won changes in tipping practices, half-hour lunch breaks, protection from retaliatory firings, new sexual harassment and promotion policies, and a grievance procedure. Workers who were fired for fighting to change foul working conditions will be reinstated and receive \$200,000 in back wages. An unusual but appropriate part of the deal is that management is required to attend training sessions to ensure continuing compliance with labor law. For more information, visit www.rocnyc.org.

Latin@ workers: highest fatality rate

The National Council of La Raza published a study on Aug. 25 of working conditions for more than 20 million Latin@s, who comprise 14 percent of the U.S. working class. "Labor Day 2008: A Snapshot of the Latino Workforce," shows the strength and diversity of Latin@ workers and exposes the effects of the economic downturn and the impact of underfunded health and retirement plans. Nearly 1,000 Latin@s were killed on the job in 2006, the highest fatality rate of all racial and ethnic groups. To download the study, visit www.nclr.org.

Machinists fight back against Boeing

On Aug. 29, 7,000 Machinists marched through the Boeing plant in Everett, Wash., chanting, "Strike, strike!" This marked a rejection of Boeing's insulting "best and final" contract offer—an offer the Machinists' bargaining committee voted to reject and then recommended a strike. The ratification and strike vote are set for Sept. 3, with a possible strike on Sept. 4. Factory strike/reject marches and rallies were held at other Boeing plants at lunch hour. Machinists in Everett also chanted, "Paint the lines!" because Boeing security paints lines outside the factories during a strike, which pickets aren't supposed to cross.

Machinists District/Local 751 representing 27,000 workers says, "It's our time ... this time," which is emblazoned on Machinists' T-shirts. They are angry at years of layoffs due to outsourcing their jobs and insulted by years of con-

Continued on page 10

Women's groups mobilize as Gov't tries to sneak in anti-choice rules

By Kathy Durkin

Pro-choice organizations sprang into action in July after they discovered proposed Bush administration regulations that endanger women's reproductive rights and medical care.

Nationwide groups including Planned Parenthood, NARAL Pro-Choice America and the National Organization for Women have generated tens of thousands of e-mail petitions and letters, including from medical organizations, to Health and Human Services Department (HHS) Secretary Michael Leavitt. They express outrage over the proposed new rules, which would affect women's access to family planning services.

Although mass pressure caused the omission of some language, which deliberately confused abortion with popular contraceptives, Leavitt formally issued the proposed HHS regulations on Aug. 21. They much resemble the prior draft and are ominous in several respects.

The 42 pages lay out the so-called "health care provider conscience" exception, whereby medical and nonmedical personnel can refuse to provide vital

health care services due to "moral or religious" beliefs. It impacts on nearly 600,000 HHS-funded health care providers, who must certify that they will hire employees, even if they oppose abortion and "other medical procedures," or their funding will be forfeited.

Women's rights, health care and family planning advocates, warning of the rules' dangers, are stepping up their national campaign against them, asking that objections be sent to HHS within the government's 30-day comments period, before the regulations are put into final form.

Women's groups stress that HHS does not guarantee birth control services, or even information. Since the regulations mandate that any staff member at a federally funded facility could deny services, prescriptions, information, counseling or referrals, this opens the door to many abuses, including denial of contraceptives. Women's groups insist that the final version protect this medical necessity.

This concern is well founded. The reactionary campaign to undo all reproductive rights extends to birth control. Anti-choice forces have stepped up their efforts to stop

federal funding to states for contraceptive services.

Mary Jane Gallagher, president of the National Family Planning & Reproductive Health Association, told Leavitt in a public letter: "You can preserve access to comprehensive family planning with just a few words. Until you take these steps, we have no choice but to assume contraception was the target all along." (nfprha.org)

Pro-choice advocates also insist that HHS ensure that existing reproductive rights laws not be undermined, including state requirements that hospitals dispense emergency contraceptives to sexual-assault survivors.

Many are troubled that the rules could be more broadly interpreted, allowing, for example, the denial of treatment to people with AIDS or immigrant families.

Debra L. Ness, president of the National Partnership for Women and Families, stresses, "This draconian regulation means that women can be refused care and information by the very people they trust to provide it." (nationalpartnership.org)

HHS is targeting the 17 million wom-

Continued on page 9

Gustav and New Orleans

Again, gov't focus is on repression

By Larry Hales

What could be colder and more callous than this Sept. 2 Associated Press headline: “Gustav revives question: Is New Orleans worth it?”

Gustav was approaching Louisiana. Local, state and federal officials had begun posturing, assuring people in the U.S. that the “mistakes” made before, during and after Hurricane Katrina would not be made again.

Preparations for the Republican National Convention were scaled down, though police agencies continued to terrorize activists and the people of Minneapolis-St. Paul to minimize protests.

George W. Bush’s speech on the opening day of the convention was canceled. John McCain was rumored to be watching the storm to ensure “a proper response.” The same for Democratic nominee Barack Obama. Mayor Ray Nagin and Louisiana Republican Gov. Bobby Jindal issued mandatory evacuations.

Nagin called Gustav “the mother of all storms” and issued a threat to those who didn’t evacuate the city of New Orleans, saying, “Anybody who’s caught looting in the city of New Orleans will go directly to Angola [Louisiana State Penitentiary]. You will not have a temporary stay in the city. You go directly to the big house, in general population,” as he issued a “dusk to dawn” curfew.

On Monday, after the storm made landfall, the director of FEMA announced that the federal government would not provide assistance to evacuees. People fleeing the path of the storm would instead have to rely on charitable organizations like the Red Cross for food and shelter.

A repressive force of police and National Guards numbering over 3,000 patrolled the city with guns drawn. The front cover of the New York Post showed white vigilantes holding automatic rifles and threatening to shoot “looters.” One said, “I haven’t shot anybody yet, but if I have to, I will.”



These are not the people the police were concerned with, even though white vigilantes were allowed to roam the streets of New Orleans after Katrina and were responsible for a number of deaths.

Neither are the police concerned about cops with itchy trigger fingers. Charges against seven cops who, on Sept. 4, 2005, shot and killed several people on the Danziger Bridge trying to flee New Orleans were recently dropped.

Yes, it’s worth it

To answer the question posed by the AP article: Yes, New Orleans is worth it. Especially to the oppressed Black masses, for whom New Orleans is of great historical and cultural significance.

It is a bastion. Its moniker—the Big Easy—is derived from the relative ease of musicians to secure gigs. The city’s history is a testament to the long, arduous struggle of Black people for true liberation.

While fires and mudslides occur every year in California, often affecting affluent areas, it is never suggested that the rich move. Rarely are suburban sprawl and its effects on the environment questioned.

The oil industry in the Gulf Coast has caused the rapid erosion of marshlands, leaving areas along the coast, especially New Orleans, more vulnerable to storms. Marsh is a natural buffer but every year, because of industrial development and the oil industry in particular, miles of this

buffer are lost.

While there has been a great deal of posturing regarding the response to Gustav, the government of the U.S. capitalist ruling class has no answer in times of disaster and crisis.

The major media touts the billions of dollars spent on disaster relief. Where that money went to is lost in the shuffle. Of the reported \$133 billion spent for Gulf Coast recovery, only 30 percent was spent on long-term projects. Most went to debris removal and the Coast Guard. (Southern Studies Gulf Coast Reconstruction Watch)

The U.S. Human Rights Network observes that \$14.8 billion was allocated to the Army Corps of Engineers to repair levees—a job that is behind schedule.

And what of today’s evacuees? The USHRN highlights the attention to “security” and “law and order” by federal, state and local governments.

Rosana Cruz of Safe Streets, Strong Communities in New Orleans says correctly, “The most vulnerable people continue to be those in public housing, people without ID, the undocumented, people with mental illness and disabilities, and the hospitalized, so in considering how successful the evacuation has been, we have to look at how many rights were respected and how humane the process is.”

The USHRN makes the point that: “Essential social services on which residents depend have yet to be fully restored,

for example public housing, elderly care services, homeless shelters, and shelters for women and healthcare. Funds targeted for the reinstitution of social services continue to be diverted to casinos, ports and other private business interests.”

It notes that people were put on buses without being tracked and were shipped to places without family members knowing—similar to what happened after Hurricane Katrina.

Thousands still have not been able to return to New Orleans since Katrina struck. They are displaced across the country. The Lower Ninth Ward is still a ghost town, with wrecked shells that used to be churches and overgrown grass where there used to be homes.

Public housing is disappearing in favor of privately run, “mixed-housing” units, leaving only a small fraction of low-income housing. Rents continue to run 46 percent higher than they were pre-Katrina, and, as the warnings from Mayor Nagin show, police repression is still high.

Another hurricane will come. It is guaranteed, whether it be Hanna, brooding to the east of Florida, or another later on this year or next. This capitalist-run government has no plans to adequately provide for people’s needs and cannot even ensure a minimum loss of life.

Gustav was much stronger when it struck Cuba, but that socialist island sustained zero fatalities, removing more than 250,000 people from its path. But in the affluent U.S., 12 deaths have been attributed to Gustav already.

This capitalist society is based on protecting the profits of a few. It wastes enormous resources on imperialist war and plunder. It is rebuilding New Orleans only to make it a playground for the rich. Only a society based on meeting human needs, which empowers the most oppressed, can ensure that no expense or resource is spared for the people facing natural disasters. □

Protest denounces destruction of affordable housing

By Heather Cottin
New York

Three days before Hurricane Gustav hit the Gulf Coast, activists from Chinatown, the Bronx, Brooklyn and Harlem, N.Y., demonstrated in support of Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita survivors on Aug. 29, the third anniversary of Hurricane Katrina.

At a rally in Chinatown, speakers drew the parallels between the destruction and gentrification of working-class neighborhoods of color in New York, other U.S. cities and the plight of the survivors. “New Orleans had Katrina and we have a hurricane that is called NYCHA (New York City Housing Authority),” said Beverly Corvin, co-president of Families United for Racial and Economic Equality (FUREE), a group that has organized against the demolition of public housing, especially for people of color, in Brooklyn.

Hurricane Katrina/Rita Survivor Assembly (Northeast region) co-coordinator Joetta Rogers, said: “Three years ago, the Gulf Coast was devastated by Hurricane Katrina. New Orleans levees were breached, and reliable sources said sabotaged, causing thousands of people to be displaced.

“Our government has failed to apply

the principles mandated by the United Nations to protect people from the Gulf Coast and New Orleans’ right to return,” she continued. Instead luxury homes have replaced the largely African-American working-class communities and she noted this is happening across the country.

Speakers denounced the criminalization of poor people and “unrestricted luxury development and privatization of public space and resources.” Right to the City, a coalition of organizations from the African-American, Chinese, Latin@, and LGBT communities denounced collaboration between the federal and city governments that has led to racist, working-class evictions in New York and throughout the U.S.

The Right to the City noted that as part of “globalization,” neoliberal policies have created worldwide a massive decrease in affordable housing for poor people.

A representative from the Chinatown Tenants Union /CAAV, acknowledging the severity of the housing crisis in Chinatown, said that the Chinese community stands in special solidarity with Katrina survivors who have been abandoned by the government to homelessness and deprivation.

New York City Councilperson Charles Barron denounced the New York City Council, which voted to put profits for bil-



Katrina survivors join housing activists at New York rally.

WW PHOTO: ANNE PRUDEN

lionaire developers before people’s needs. “No matter who is in power in Washington,” Barron said, “The struggle for affordable housing and for the rights of the Katrina/Rita survivors must continue.”

Marching from Chinatown, activists stopped at buildings where landlords are forcing people to move to make way for luxury apartments. Police prevented the

demonstrators from protesting in front of U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) offices. HUD is a prime mover for the privatization and destruction of public housing nationally.

Brenda Stokely of the NY Solidarity with Katrina/Rita Survivors Coalition said the support of members of the Asian, Latin@

Continued on page 9

At Detroit’s Labor Day

Cynthia McKinney speaks on war & racism

By Abayomi Azikiwe
Editor, Pan-African News Wire
Detroit

Labor Day weekend is always an important time in Detroit, known as the “Motor City,” home to hundreds of thousands of organized and unorganized workers.

What made this year’s Labor Day significant was the visit of Green Party presidential candidate Cynthia McKinney, who is providing an alternative perspective to the two dominant U.S. political parties, alongside her vice-presidential running mate, activist and Hip-Hop artist, Rosa Clemente.

At an Aug. 30 campaign rally, McKinney spoke to a capacity audience at the International Institute. Political prisoner Rev. Edward Pinkney spoke through a taped video presentation from the prison where he is being held on trumped-up charges stemming from his organizing work in Berrien County.

Rev. Pinkney is a Green Party candidate for U.S. Congress in the district where he worked to overturn decades of institutional racism, police brutality and corporate control over the political direction of the city of Benton Harbor. This activist was sentenced to 3-10 years in state prison for quoting biblical scriptures.

McKinney in her address stated, “I first heard of Benton Harbor in 2003 when there was a young man killed by the police which sparked several days of rebellion, our own intifada.”

McKinney said that this response must be viewed within the context of the international situation of oppressed people throughout the world.

“People all over the world are liberating themselves. In Paraguay, a former priest, who is a liberation theologian, was recently voted in as president because the people felt free enough to select a leader who represented their hopes and not their fears,” McKinney stated.

She discussed the crisis in Mexico when the popular choice for president was denied the right to take office in 2006. McKinney drew an analogy between this and the rigging of elections in the U.S. in 2000 and 2004.

“When people [in Mexico] showed up their names were not on the ballot. The masses shut down the capital for five months and set up a shadow government,” McKinney continued.

“The reason why so many people immigrate to the United States from Mexico is that the so-called ‘free trade’ policies such as NAFTA, which was put in place under a Democratic administration, have helped to destroy their economy.”

“In a recent referendum in Mexico,” McKinney said, “the people rejected efforts to privatize water, electricity and oil.”

McKinney criticized the \$700 billion annual U.S. defense budget, which she said could be utilized to correct the overall economic crisis.

McKinney expressed her support for the Michigan campaign to win a moratorium on foreclosures and evictions.

Detroit Green Party co-chair and candidate for State Representative, Derrick Grigsby, spoke on the Sept. 17 march on the state capital in Lansing being organized by the Moratorium Now! Coalition to Stop Foreclosures and Evictions.

The Moratorium Now! Coalition is mobilizing people all over the state to demand the immediate passage of Senate Bill 1306, sponsored by state Sen. Hansen Clarke. The bill, if passed, would impose a two-year moratorium on foreclosures in Michigan.

Failure to defend the Black vote

McKinney, who served six terms in the U.S. Congress as a Georgia Democrat, resigned from that political party last year.

“Republican theft and Democratic Party complicity is why Bush is in the White House today. The Democratic Party did not defend the Black votes that were stolen in Florida in 2000 and Ohio in 2004. It was the Green Party that pursued legal cases against voter fraud in Ohio during the aftermath of the national elections in 2004. ...

“When Black, Brown, Asian and white people come together, the country can move forward.” McKinney received a standing ovation for her speech.

On Aug. 31, McKinney was a featured guest on the “Fighting For Justice” radio program on AM 1310, the local affiliate of Air America. The program, sponsored by the Detroit Coalition Against Police Brutality (DCAPB), focused on the arrival of Hurricane Gustav in the Gulf region

and New Orleans in particular.

McKinney had been discouraged from holding a congressional hearing on the failure of the Bush administration to provide effective relief for the victims of Hurricane Katrina in 2005. She questions the ability of the federal government to protect the people in the face of other natural disasters in 2008.

She remarked, “I along with other Democratic congresspeople was told not to participate in the hearings by the party leadership. The reason why there is a Republican governor today in Louisiana is directly related to the removal of hundreds of thousands of people, many of whom were African Americans, from the state of Louisiana.”

On Sept. 1 over 100,000 people participated in the annual Labor Day march here. Delegations from the UAW, AFSCME, Unite Here, SEIU, AFL-CIO, the Teamsters and others marched in their union colors chanting pro-labor slogans.

Members of the Moratorium Now! Coalition distributed thousands of Sept. 17 leaflets to workers.

Barack Obama spoke at the rally after the march where people of all races and nationalities lined up to hear him. He was joined on stage by leading officials of the major trade union organizations based in the Detroit area.

At the Anchor restaurant, which caters to union members, McKinney attended a reception in her honor in the aftermath of the Labor Day march.

“I have a 100 percent voting record in support of labor,” McKinney said. “The conditions today require us to do things that have never been done before. This is why I declared my independence from the Democratic Party.”

Ron Scott, a co-founder of the Detroit chapter of the Black Panther Party in 1968 and currently the spokesperson for the DCAPB, said that “the only way to make change is through the people. [McKinney’s] candidacy and movement represents the struggle. Today we are facing a nationalization of law enforcement. The Counterintelligence Program (COINTELPRO) never left but only changed its form. ...

“Republicans put a woman on their ticket,” Scott continued. “However, this party has put a real freedom fighter on its ticket.”

McKinney expressed her admiration for the legacy of the Black Panther Party and other organizations that have challenged the system of racism. □

No letup in police intimidation as Vets, immigrants protest at DNC

By Larry Hales
Denver

During the five days of protests against the Democratic National Convention held here at the Pepsi Center, the media and the local Denver government grew fond of pointing out that the tens of thousands expected by organizers with Recreate 68 did not show up.

However, during the week the city of Denver did not appear to relinquish any of the cops it had garnered to prepare for tens of thousands of protesters. And in fact, thousands did protest during the week and the last few days showed no letup in numbers or spirit.

On Wednesday, Aug. 27, thousands marched in support of Iraq Veterans Against the War. The march covered four miles, from the Denver Coliseum to the Pepsi Center. There was no permit to march, but the route was negotiated with the police by IVAW.

IVAW had gone out of its way to work with the cops and applaud their efforts, even though cops had intimidated protesters throughout the week and had rioted on Monday, attacking and arresting protesters and other people just walking from work or shopping. Hundreds were entrapped and assaulted after cops chased protesters out of Civic Center Park, though a permit had been granted for use of the park.

Tuesday showed no letup as cops launched brutal assaults against Recreate 68 activist Carlo Garcia and Code Pink activist Alicia Forrest.



Iraq Veterans Against the War.

PHOTOS:TROOPS OUT NOW COALITION

The cops did not respond to the overtures by IVAW with any respect. Instead, they brought out hundreds of officers in full riot gear on bicycles, motorcycles, horses and the riding boards of SUVs. The state forces lined the entire route of the veterans’ peaceful march, stopping it several times along the way for no apparent reason other than to assert their control.

However, this small army, meant to be intimidating, did not stop the march from growing. Onlookers and people getting off work joined in and swelled the ranks, despite the oppressiveness of a blazing August sun. Boots Riley of The Coup and members of Rage Against the Machine, both groups that performed at the Denver Coliseum, participated in the march as well.

Militant chants of “One, two, three four, what we need is class war! Five, six, seven,

eight, end the war, smash the state!” alternated with “Troops out now!” and “Cops out now!”

The march ended up across from



Immigrant rights march.

Auraria Parkway, the street that separates Auraria campus, the largest in the state, from the Pepsi Center grounds.

On Thursday, Aug. 28, more than 1,000

Obama’s speech in Denver

By Larry Holmes
Holmes is a Workers World Party Secretariat member.

According to reports, 40 million people watched Barack Obama’s televised speech on Aug. 28.

Along with everyone else who watched the speech was virtually every person of African descent with access to a television, not just in the U.S. but everywhere. Black people tuned in to watch Obama’s speech as well as that of his marital partner, Michelle Obama, earlier that week.

Obama is a gifted orator, but that’s not the reason why Black people wanted to see and hear his speech. It was about being part of a landmark event in the struggle of Black people. It was about witnessing a giant step towards the election of the first U.S. president of African descent.

Michelle Obama is a formidable person. But for the most part, it was not her words at the Democratic National Convention that made her speech important to Black people; it was the possibility that she might be the first Black woman, who was neither a slave nor a maid, to live in the White House.

The tears in U.S. House Representative John Lewis’s eyes, who was among the 84,000 people in Invesco Field where Obama spoke, were like the tears in so many other eyes that night, real and bittersweet.

Lewis still bears the scars on his head from being beaten almost to death when he and hundreds of others were attacked on a bridge by legions of the Alabama state police as they were attempting to march from Selma to Montgomery, Ala., for the basic right of Black people to vote. There was so much blood spilled on the Edmund Pettus Bridge that March 7, 1965, that the day came to be known as “Bloody Sunday.”

Most African Americans of a certain age, and many born since then, understood that the stage that Barack Obama stood on that night in Denver was paid for with the blood of courageous Black people and their allies in the struggle for freedom.

The historical significance of his speech was not in the text; it was that it happened.

The purpose of Barack Obama’s acceptance speech—and he understood this more than anyone—was to reassure the U.S. capitalist ruling class that he would defend and promote their imperialist class interests as enthusiastically as his opponent. Obama needed Wall Street to understand that you don’t have to be white, a “war hero,” super rich, or a Republican like John McCain to wage war.

The level of bourgeois politics in the U.S. is so low that it’s a liability for a

participated in a march for immigrant rights, shutting down one section of an overpass to Interstate 25. The march ended in Lincoln Park near the public housing complex where Frank Lobato, a disabled Latino man, had been shot while lying in bed by Denver cop Ranjan Ford.

The five days of protests were designed to show the complicity of the Democratic Party in U.S. imperialism and to demonstrate that an independent movement free from either ruling class party is needed. The militancy did not wane.

On display as well were the repressive forces of the state, regardless of the non-violent nature of the protests.

Larry Hales was an organizer with Recreate 68 Alliance.

presidential candidate to appear to have a sense of the world, of history, or to think too much. This is an obvious problem for Obama, so he’s trying to act more “manly.” It’s important that whenever Obama talks about pulling troops out of Iraq, he qualifies this by promising to send more troops to Afghanistan.

What Obama didn’t say

If anyone was expecting Obama to say anything of interest to progressives, his speech was a huge disappointment. If he was going to give a progressive speech, it would have been hard for him not to express his outrage over the Department of Homeland Security’s latest act of war against immigrant workers—the arrest of 600 workers at an electrical equipment factory in Laurel, Miss., which happened on the opening day of the Democratic National Convention.

He would have also talked about the racist criminality of the government’s response to Hurricane Katrina and the continuation of that crime in the scandalous way that survivors of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita are being treated three years later.

He could have taken a little time in his speech to explain that when he gave that awful speech a few months ago, where he blamed Black people for the fact that they don’t have jobs and so many of them are in jail, he wasn’t an apologist for the capitalist system’s unbridled war against Black youth.

He might have used his speech to criticize the Denver police for attacking, brutalizing and arresting demonstrators every day of the Denver convention, but that wasn’t going to happen. With home foreclosures and layoffs, cutbacks and the pauperization of the working class, there is so much that Obama might have said if he had any other objectives than getting elected. But the fact that he didn’t say what we wanted to hear should come as no surprise to anyone at this point because Obama wasn’t talking to the workers; he was still auditioning for the ruling class.

conference so as to not seem insensitive in the face of Hurricane Gustav, activists remembered the neglect of the Bush administration in response to Hurricane Katrina. A Troops Out Now Coalition banner read “Bush—McCain; Katrina—Gustav: Criminal Neglect Continues.”

Meanwhile, hundreds of youth engaged in militant street actions. They were met by brutal attacks at the hands of the police, including being doused with pepper spray and tear gas. Fight Imperialism, Stand Together (FIST) activist and eyewitness videographer Elena Everett reported that a disabled man in a wheelchair was sprayed head-to-toe with pepper spray. Others were hit in the back with tear gas canisters.

The Coldsnap Legal Collective (coldsnaplegal.wordpress.com) reports that as of Sept. 1, the Ramsey County Sheriff’s Office had announced 284 arrests. Some 130 were charged with felony offenses, which most likely will be used to keep them in jail until the end of the convention. The collective says that the majority of those arrested are still being held in jail, and some are being refused proper medical attention. The collective is asking supporters to call the jail at 651-266-9350 to demand that these activists be released

The danger that the Obama phenomenon poses for the Black struggle and the independent political development of the U.S. working class is the prospect that his ascendancy will breathe new life into the capitalist political system and its Democratic Party. For three quarters of a century, the Democratic Party’s main function has been to subordinate the U.S. working class, the Black struggle and all progressive movements to the leadership of U.S. imperialism.

Indeed, in the wake of the developing capitalist economic storm, the need on the part of U.S. imperialism to revitalize the Democratic Party so that it can continue to thwart the development of the working class is clear.

True, Hillary Rodham Clinton and Bill Clinton falsely embraced their enemy, Barack Obama, at the DNC in order to save their political careers and legacy. But they also gave those phony speeches to preserve the Democratic Party.

Political activists in the U.S. are debating what the approach should be to all of this. Nowhere is that discussion more serious and critical than within the Black liberation movement. Workers World has made space in its pages to share that discussion. This issue includes a statement by the Black Left Unity Network as well as an open letter by Black activist and director U-Savior.

Many important activists are coalescing around the independent presidential campaign of former Georgia Congressperson Cynthia McKinney and her running mate, Rosa Clemente. McKinney reminded us at an antiwar rally in Denver before the opening of the DNC that, “The Democratic Party’s national leadership didn’t even mention Hurricanes Katrina and Rita survivors in their congressional agenda for the first 100 days.”

Obama and the legacy of Dr. King

The Black working class is more likely to understand that Obama’s candidacy and his election, if such is the case, will signify an achievement that is mostly symbolic.

and given proper medical attention.

While the corporate media has focused almost exclusively on property damage sustained during the street actions, including windows being broken at a Macy’s department store, several eyewitnesses told this reporter that the person who began breaking the windows was clearly an agent provocateur working with the police. He approached the window in clear view of the cops, broke it and walked away without an arrest. A police car was also damaged.

However, at a press conference the following day, march coordinator Jess Sundin was quick to point out that any rage displayed by activists in the streets is completely justified and pales in comparison to the state violence committed on a daily basis by U.S. forces at home and abroad.

The joint press conference was held by the Coalition to March on the RNC and Stop the War, the RNC Welcoming Committee and the Poor People’s Economic and Human Rights Campaign—all of whom

Some may have expectations that Obama will do something to improve the conditions of Black people should he become president. But having expectations is how the working class learns what works and what doesn’t work in its development as a class. This is an unavoidable and inevitable part of the process that leads to class-consciousness, struggle and ultimately revolutionary consciousness.

Symbolism tends to conceal the underlying truth instead of revealing it. However, in the struggle of oppressed and colonized people, symbolic things have some value before they are rightly cast aside for want of real things.

It is possible, even probable, that in November, just as in the primary elections, millions of whites, along with Latin@s, Asians, Arabs and Native Americans will join the millions of Black voters in electing Barack Obama president.

However, even if the wiser heads in the U.S. ruling class agree that—given the trouble that their system is in—Obama would give U.S. imperialism a desperately needed face lift, an easy Obama electoral victory shouldn’t be assumed.

More important than the policy differences between the two capitalist political parties is the partisan struggle over control of the vast U.S. capitalist government, its treasury, its state apparatus, and all of the privileges, wealth, favors and power that come with it.

For such a prize, both parties and their backers in the ruling class will spend a fortune. And the Republican Party, or, depending on the circumstances, the Democratic Party will use racism and whatever other reactionary garbage they think might help their cause.

They will use racism in their campaign over the next two months and maybe on Election Day they will disenfranchise a large enough percentage of the Black or Latin@ voters, or both, who come to the polls to make a difference. The ruling class at every level of government is good at this.

Continued on page 8

held fast in their solidarity with arrestees, despite attempts by corporate media reporters to bait them into denouncing “violence.” One man, representing the Poor People’s Economic and Human Rights Campaign, challenged the reporters: “You act like we’re having this press conference in a country that hasn’t practiced oppression for hundreds of years.”

A number of activities are planned to continue the protests through the end of the convention on Sept. 4, including free public music festivals, a “March for Our Lives” and a “solutions driven” peace conference. For updates on activities, visit dncrnc.wordpress.com. □

March on RNC demands end to war

Continued from page 1



PHOTO ELENA EVERETT

During election and beyond

A call for Black unity, action

Following are excerpts from an Aug. 24 statement by the Black Left Unity Network, which held its inaugural conference this past May 30-June 1 in Chapel Hill, N.C. Go to www.workers.org to read the entire statement. Contact Black Left Unity Network by e-mail at Saladin62@aol.com.

There are various pro and con views about Barack Obama's presidential platform. They all have a ring of truth. However, the massive Black support he is receiving represents the desire by Black people and a demand of our historic anti-racist struggle for self-determination to have power and a voice in shaping our own destiny as an oppressed people and as part of the wider U.S. working class who suffer from racism, sexism, homophobia and capitalist exploitation. This sentiment cannot be ignored by Black activists who are committed to building a radical mass movement that challenges and seeks to transform the U.S. political and economic system.

However, the Black liberation movement, those Black organizations and social movements that unite within a national framework to organize and empower the Black masses to realize self-determination in our struggles for democracy and national liberation, are fragmented.

This fragmentation has greatly weakened the national Black community's response to major government and corporate attacks on Black people's democratic and human rights, which are rapidly intensifying under the current economic crisis. Thus, the differences around the Obama candidacy must not be a source for the continued fragmentation of the Black liberation movement.

There is a sentiment among the Black masses expressed through the hundreds of local struggles throughout the country demanding radical changes in the U.S.

political, economic and social system and in power relationships between the haves and have-nots.

The past 30 years has been a period of major reversals in the gains won by the Civil Rights and Black Power movements. The exoneration of the killer cops that murdered Amadou Diallo and Sean Bell are examples of what the Black masses can expect from the criminal injustice system.

Racist sentencing has led to Blacks constituting 1 million of the 2.3 million people in U.S. prisons. And many historic Black communities and institutions have been gentrified and dismantled.

The outright government racism and human rights violations against the majority Black and working-class population in New Orleans and throughout the Gulf Coast following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, including denying thousands the right to return to their communities, is an unmistakable indication of the genocide facing masses of Black people if there is no organized challenge to Black national oppression.

Black activists must see themselves as entering more than just an historic presidential campaign.

And while the struggle against Black national oppression may take on new dimensions depending on the developments during and the outcome of the presidential elections, this struggle will continue and will require a strong and politically conscious mass base, and an engaged national Black liberation movement.

There might be confusion amidst the mass sentiment, thinking that, since a Black candidate will be the Democratic Party presidential nominee and possibly the next U.S. president, somehow the U.S. political system and climate may be opening up democratically. The recent U.S. Senate vote approving a major expansion of the government's surveillance powers

makes clear that the anti-democratic and repressive direction of the U.S. government since Sept. 11, 2001, has not changed.

A program of action must mobilize the Black masses along with other social movements that speak truth to power and call on Obama, and all who seek to lead this country, to hold true to the core principles advanced by Dr. King of ending racism, poverty, repression and war.

We call on Black activists, mass organizations and social movements to adopt the slogan, We Charge Genocide.

We call for a National Black Agenda for democracy including: Reconstruction in the Gulf Coast and the right of return for survivors; collective bargaining and the right to organize for all workers; family-supporting living wages and income for the gainfully unemployed and disabled; universal healthcare; end to U.S. wars, military aggression and forced regime change in Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine, Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean and throughout the world; U.S. accountability



to international human rights covenants; end gay discrimination; stop gentrification; the right to the cities; major funding for infrastructure needs; reparations; stop environmental racism and global warming; immigrant rights; end police violence, and economic justice.

These demands should be promoted inside the trade unions, mass organizations and social movements comprising large numbers of the Black working class and other oppressed sectors throughout society. They should be promoted throughout the many mass activities aligned with the Obama campaign and by the McKinney/Clemente campaign.

Following the general election we call for the organizing of a mass-based National Black Assembly in the first quarter of 2009 to develop a more comprehensive program of action. □

Obama's speech

Continued from page 7

This much is certain: the contradictions in the Obama campaign pose a challenge to all on the left who want to move away from the capitalist parties, especially those who are struggling to revive a revolutionary, struggle-oriented, multinational working class, socialist, anti-imperialist and internationalist perspective.

The questions posed by the 2008 presidential elections, along with other world developments, are going to force the political movement, especially within the U.S., to develop politically and numerically. This pressure is not only good; it's an absolutely essential part of the development of

the working class and its movement.

It is much more than ironic that Obama made his acceptance speech on the 45th anniversary of the 1963 civil rights march and rally led by Martin Luther King Jr. Obama's acceptance speech was part of the class struggle over King's legacy. The working class and the capitalist class have been fighting over who has claim to King's legacy.

Both classes want ownership so they can more effectively use it in their class interests. That struggle has never been more critical than it is today. Obama's speech was an important and serious effort to firm up the grasp on King's legacy of the class that Obama serves.

Obama's hand is stronger if one has a selective memory of King's work and legacy and no memory of the final chapter of his life. Notice how the ruling class never remembers that King said the U.S. was "the greatest purveyor of violence in the world"? The last year of King's life was his most transformative. That transformation led him to call for the Poor People's March in 1967. King's programmatic goals were evolving from fighting to end legal racist segregation or apartheid in the U.S. to encompassing the demand for jobs at a living income for all. The capitalist ruling class pretends to revere King, but it wants everyone to forget about this.

In that last year, King was grappling with the contradiction that is at the heart of current events. He understood that in the freedom struggle, there was a place for victories that were either limited or symbolic in nature. However, he had come around to the understanding that merely altering the appearance of the capitalist system would in a short time amount to little more than a cruel betrayal of the fierce urgency to change the system.

This contradiction pushed King towards the fight for economic justice, the working class, the class struggle and an anti-capitalist struggle.

The combination of the deepening crisis of the capitalist system and the historic yet essentially symbolic progress that Obama represents, along with highly interconnected developments, is bound to elevate the class question, clarify the necessity for class struggle, and compel a wide resurgence of the working class struggle in the U.S., with Black workers occupying a critical position in its leadership. □

Black & blues at the DNC

Following is an open letter to the Black community written on Aug. 28 by U-Savior, who is with Black Waxe Multimedia, Inc. and is the director of the documentary, "Disappearing Voices: The Decline of Black Radio." (www.disappearingvoices.com) E-mail: info@blackwaxe.com.

My beautiful Black brothers and sisters,

I've been listening to the nationwide chatter of folks smitten by Barack Obama's candidacy. At the DNC he had people, and not just women, swooning over him and this aura of supposed change he's got billowing about him like a halo. In the eternal popularity contest that is the United States presidential election, many equate him to a rock star. I've seen people blinking back tears because they are so profoundly inspired by his candidacy. These are the same folks for whom Barack signifies an arrival for Black folks. I'm in tears too. Because none of the news coverage mentioned how police brutalized PEACEFUL, PERMITTED protesters at the DNC in Denver, beating women down with billy clubs, arresting 80-year-olds and pepper-spraying kids. Rioting, out-of-control cops attacked the press and blocked the view of the cameras so that they could have their violent way with protesters, and none of it on record. They even beat up producers and reporters from USA Today. Mind you, none of this happened at the protests of the Republican National Convention at the last election.

People, Black people in particular, need to pay very close attention. This is political theater bought to you by Fake-Assed Political Process Productions. I'd rather watch soap operas and I hate soap operas but at least they try to develop characters you can actually believe in. I've been trying to be diplomatic about my opinions because we're all entitled, right? But seriously, this is not me expressing my "opinion." This is me documenting what is actually going on. And this is people ignoring the truth because they don't have the strength of mind to turn off the television and pursue alternate means

of information gathering, like alternative and independent media. I might "think" Obama is a charlatan in my "opinion" but as an observant (and well-read, well-informed) human being I "know" that nobody in the presidential office works in the interests of the people, at least not right now; maybe when people start getting engaged in politics as more than spectators.

And my disclaimer: I love Black people. And I do believe in supporting your own. I want nothing more than to see the end of discrimination and oppression. I would love to see a Black president. Of course I want to live in a country where people can live side by side in peace. But if the price of peace means foregoing justice or the truth, if it's just "getting along" and acting like everything is okay and "hoping for change" instead of "working for change," then I'm not with it. Anybody selling anything else is a liar. Another reminder: we were chock full of hope over Gore and look what happened.

Don't people remember that when we saw the first Black elected official in this country, people had the same response? Oh Lordy we done made it! Cleefus is an assemblyman-alderman-mayor or whatever. Now look at the state of Black politics. But Obama's supposed to wipe that slate clean? Idiocy. Our supposed savior has to be more than Black. He's got to have integrity and he's got to be a person at heart, not a politician. And people have to realize that right now there's no room in this system for a person like that. But we could change it, the people, you and me, not Obama the "rock star." My intelligence is insulted by this "we shall overcome" analysis when it ain't us doing any of the overcoming. Today, Barack will be baptized as the golden boy of the Democratic Party, 45 years to the day of Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream Speech." I have a dream too. I have a dream that one day people will wake the fuck up.

Revolution ... then Peace,
U-Savior

Anti-war forces call Sept. 27 day of action

Pentagon ramps up threats on Iran

By Dustin Langley

While much of the media and public attention has been on the Olympics and the Republican and Democratic national conventions, the Pentagon has been ramping up for what many believe is a planned attack on Iran.

On Aug. 31, the U.S. and Britain finished five days of naval exercises in the Central and Southern Arabian Gulf. According to the U.S. Navy, the mobilization, called “Exercise Goalkeeper,” focused on “command and control in locating and tracking specific vessels deemed to pose a threat to Coalition nations in the Gulf region. The exercise also allows Coalition teams to board the vessel and practice the procedures for handing them over to Coast Guard ships.”

The exercises follow July’s Operation Brimstone, a U.S.-led naval exercise that included units from the British, French, Brazilian and Italian navies. Brimstone provided these forces with training for operation in shallow coastal waters such as the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz. This comes as both houses of Congress have pending resolutions that would mandate an air, sea and land blockade of Iran.

A naval blockade, were it to be implemented, is equivalent to a declaration of war. It constitutes a blatant violation of international law. According to Francis Boyle, a renowned specialist in international law:

“A ‘blockade’ is a term used under international law to specifically refer to belligerent measures taken by a nation for the purposes of preventing the passage of vessels or aircraft to and from another country. Customary international law recognizes blockades as an act of war because of the belligerent use of force even against third-party nations in enforcing the blockade. Blockades as acts of war have been recognized as such in the Declaration of Paris of 1856 and the Declaration of London of 1909 that delineate the international rules of warfare.”

Activists across the U.S. and worldwide have been mobilizing. On Aug. 2, in response to an emergency call to action by the Stop War On Iran (SWOI) campaign, there were protests, pickets and rallies in more than 100 cities.

Organizers with SWOI, hoping to turn up the heat and preempt an attack, have called for another day of action on Sept. 27. The call to action reads, in part:

“What we do now can make a difference.

We must act now. As more U.S. warships are deploying to the Persian Gulf, we have to mobilize to stop an ‘October Surprise’ or any other attack on Iran—or any other country. Politicians don’t stop wars—they create them. The only force that will stop endless war in the Middle East is a massive grassroots people’s movement.

“While billions of dollars go to war spending, at home the unemployment rate hit the biggest spike in 23 years. Home foreclosures and evictions are increasing. Fuel and food prices are through the

roof. While the situation is growing dire for many, Washington’s cuts to domestic programs continue. The coming fiscal year, beginning on Oct. 1, will bring drastic cuts. A new U.S. war will bring only more suffering.”

Activists report that response to the call has been encouraging, and that they are expecting to see actions in well over 100 cities across the U.S. and internationally. For more information, to endorse the call to action, or to get involved, go to [www. StopWarOnIran.org](http://www.StopWarOnIran.org). □

Floridians march to stop war on Iran

By Michael Martinez
Melbourne, Fla.

A record crowd for the city of Melbourne of about 500 people rallied on Aug. 30 in what was called Florida’s first mass march to stop war on Iran. Floridians of all walks of life converged to demonstrate their repudiation of Washington’s lust for war. Protesters gathered in Front Street Park and later marched to Melbourne’s City Hall chanting, “If they don’t make peace, we’ll bring it to the streets.”

The rally and march were led by a broad coalition of anti-war organizations calling themselves Patriots for Peace. Upon arriving at City Hall, the marchers were greeted by one single counterdemonstrator with a sign saying, “Give war a chance.” He took off before the rally officially started.

Rain began to pour down as soon as the first few speakers got on the microphone, but that wasn’t enough to dampen the

spirit of the marchers. A representative of Stop War on Iran warned the crowd that although some may feel that U.S. intentions to attack Iran have faded and died out, the threat of a war is as strong as ever and people must stay vigilant in continuing public and visible opposition to any ideas of war with Iran.

Many of the anti-war groups that met in Melbourne welcomed the call by Stop War on Iran and pledged to join it by building local actions on Sept. 27 and continuing the fight to prevent another military adventure by Bush and Co. in the Middle East.

The show put on at the Democratic National Convention and the focus on the presidential elections may distract the public eye, but no matter who wins in November, only pressure and mobilizations from the working masses like this one can force the imperialists to back down. □

HIV crisis worse than previously reported

Continued from page 3

nationalities. As early as 1984 scientists recognized that the widespread incidence of AIDS in Africa was linked to heterosexual transmission. The international AIDS charity AVERT reports that by 1993 an estimated 9 million adults in sub-Saharan Africa were living with HIV. Some 1.7 million had full-blown AIDS. AVERT estimates that by 2007 more than 22 million Africans were living with HIV and over 1.3 million died from AIDS that year.

The legacy of colonialism and continued political interference by former colonial powers such as the U.S. and Britain in many of these countries has left African governments unable to adequately respond to the epidemic. Racist attitudes on the part of governments in the developed capitalist countries prevent the distribution of financial aid necessary to solve the pandemic.

National oppression has taken a disproportionate toll on communities living inside the U.S. as well. Each year more than 30,000 Black people contract HIV. This accounts for almost 54 percent of new cases. The Black AIDS Institute estimates that the number of Black people living with the AIDS virus in the U.S. exceeds the number of cases in Botswana, Ethiopia, Guyana, Haiti, Namibia, or Rwanda—six of the world’s worst-hit countries. The institute also estimates that a Black person living with HIV in the U.S. is 2.5 times more likely to die than a white person.

Latin@s living in the U.S. are also at higher risk of transmission. The CDC reports that between 2000 and 2004, AIDS prevalence increased by 31 percent among Latin@s, while whites showed only a 22 percent increase. There was a 7 percent increase in the death rate among Latin@s with AIDS during this same time period, while whites actually experienced a 19 percent decline.

Sexism adds yet another dimension to

the AIDS pandemic. The World Health Organization estimates that in 2005 more than 17.5 million women worldwide were living with HIV. CDC statistics demonstrate that AIDS is the leading cause of death for Black women aged 25-34 years in the U.S. Rape means HIV can be transmitted to women during nonconsensual sex. The slow development of female contraception effective in preventing the transmission of HIV robs women of the full control they need to protect themselves. Recent CDC studies even demonstrate that women are less likely to receive effective prescription treatments than men.

Pharmaceutical companies charge extortionate prices for the antiretroviral medicines HIV-positive people need to live a longer, healthier life. According to the World Bank the necessary prescription therapies can cost up to \$1,000 a month. Internationally, drug companies routinely refuse to lower rates or allow the development of lower-cost generic alternatives. In turn the big pharmaceutical companies make billions while millions suffer and die.

National oppression, sexism and homophobia continue to exacerbate the AIDS crisis both domestically and internationally. The unnecessary pain and suffering inflicted upon those living with HIV is rooted in the oppressive nature of the global capitalist system. □

Anti-choice rules

Continued from page 4

en—low-income, uninsured or underinsured, many of them African-American or Latina—who rely on federally funded reproductive health services. At risk are their rights to make informed health care decisions and obtain essential care. With a growing economic crisis and loss of jobs, incomes and insurance, the government should be expanding women’s health care, not underfunding programs and endangering existing services.

Action needed to rescind anti-woman regulations

Since the Bush gang came into office, they have pushed to severely set back women’s reproductive rights and health care services. In its final months in office, the administration is trying to give anti-choice forces what they want, putting right-wing ideology ahead of science and health while harming women.

In this latest fiasco, HHS would even

reward Bush’s right-wing, anti-choice allies with federal funding for their bogus “pregnancy crisis centers,” which provide false information and try to dissuade women from seeking family planning services.

What has stopped the ultraright so far in their efforts to overturn reproductive rights has been the determination, hard work and organizing of pro-choice and women’s health advocacy groups, and the mass pressure by women nationwide.

Women’s rights and health organizations see this as a pivotal battle. Major national pro-choice groups are strongly mobilizing. They urge everyone who supports reproductive rights and women’s health care to flood HHS with letters and e-mails before Sept. 25 demanding Leavitt rescind the regulations in full. Sign on at www.naral.org, www.plannedparenthood.org or www.now.org. □

Destruction of affordable housing

Continued from page 5

and other nonwhite communities in New York showed how oppressed groups are uniting in opposition to an attack on working people of color. “We are organizing in this city to fight, because housing is a right! Power to the People!”

A fundraiser for the New York City survivors was held later on that evening at Judson Memorial Church. □

SEPT. 27
National Day of Action
Organize an action in your area!
100+ cities

October 1 marks the beginning of a new fiscal year, with draconian budget cuts at the federal and state level . We need money for education, healthcare, housing, and other human needs, not endless war for empire!

For information or to endorse, go to www.StopWarOnIran.org





Biden and Palin

The vice presidential candidates of the two major parties, Sen. Joseph Biden of Delaware and Gov. Sarah Palin of Alaska, confirm that nothing has changed about either of these capitalist parties.

There has been great change, on the other hand, among the masses of people who go to the polls. They are very much against the war in Iraq, after having been bamboozled for a while by the lies of the Bush administration. They want the government to do something about the economic crisis that is bearing down on them like a freight train out of control. They are ready to try something new to bring about change in this government. Many, many white people have put behind them the extreme prejudice that would have ruled out an African American presidential candidate in every election before this one.

Yes, there has been change already. But look at Biden and Palin, chosen by their respective running mates, and you won't find it. Let's take Palin first, since every liberal can give you a long list of reasons why she's not just right of center but comes from the ideological far right on issues like women's right to choose, climate change and the environment, reining in (not) the oil companies, and science—like denying evolution.

The only thing that seems to separate Palin from a whole host of Christian fundamentalist political figures is that she's a woman. But being a woman, and acting on behalf of women, are two very different things. After Margaret Thatcher,

Madeleine Albright, Condoleezza Rice, and a bunch of other consummate imperialist women, it should be clear that gender alone does not define a political figure. Their class loyalties trumped any feelings for the problems of working-class women, whose situation has been growing direr as corporate rule grows stronger and meaner.

And then there's Biden—an experienced servant of imperialist interests who has headed the Senate Foreign Relations Committee just when U.S. foreign relations are in a shambles. Why? Because most of the world rejects the rapacious aggression carried out by the Pentagon on behalf of the money lords of Wall Street. Biden knows how to talk softly while shepherding Congress into funding the big sticks of war and intervention.

Biden is also known as the MasterCard senator because he worked with the big banks to change the laws so workers can't escape onerous debt any more by declaring bankruptcy.

Both these figures, by the way, come from states with great wealth and very small populations, where the super-rich (oil, lumber and mining corporations in Alaska, DuPonts in Delaware) hold the privileges and power of medieval lords.

Behind all the hoopla, smoke and mirrors of the choreographed conventions, the capitalist political process continues to disenfranchise the working class, especially its most oppressed sectors, while turning power over to craven servants of big capital. □

Long live the DPRK!

Workers World congratulates the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on the 60th anniversary of its founding. In 1948, when it defied the imperialist world by refusing to bow down before the U.S. occupation of southern Korea and declared its existence as an independent republic committed to socialist development in the north, few of the capitalist pundits thought it would survive one year, let alone 60.

The Korean people and their revolutionary leaders have shown extraordinary ability and willpower in keeping their commitment. They have faced ferocious aggression from U.S. imperialism that never ended, even after the heroic Korean People's Army forced the Pentagon to accept a ceasefire in 1953 after three years of invasion and devastating war.

They have skillfully defended the country and deterred more threats of aggression by building up their armed strength, while at the same time relying on the consciousness of the people as the ultimate safeguard of their revolutionary gains.

What all Koreans want, and what the U.S. has done everything to prevent, is the reunification of their divided people. First Kim Il Sung, and now Kim Jong Il, both great leaders of the struggling people of Korea, have pursued that goal vigorously. The slogan "Korea is one!" today expresses that desire. We are sure it will become a reality as U.S. imperialism's hold over the world is weakened by the struggling masses everywhere.

U.S. out of Korea!
Long live the DPRK!

ON THE PICKET LINE

Continued from page 4

tract concessions. They point out Boeing has made \$13 billion in profits in the last five years. The Machinists want job security commitments, including an end to private vendor parts deliveries into the plants. The union is fighting increases in medical costs. The workers want pay and pension increases. They want better pay raises for those low on the wage ladder. Boeing came into bargaining demanding cutbacks and concessions. But the mobilization of workers shot down most of Boeing's concession demands.

The Machinists began their contract mobilization campaign in July. Workers walked out of the six Boeing plants on July 16, shutting them down. They went to Seattle Center and voted 99 percent for strike authorization. Since then, workers loudly bang their tools at the top of every hour and chant "Strike!" on the factory floor. On Aug. 24, 4,000 Machinists and their families, led by 200 workers with motorcycles, rallied and marched outside the Doubletree Hotel Seattle Airport where negotiations were held. *(Report from Jim McMahon of Seattle.)* □

Vo Nguyen Giap at 97

Vietnam's incomparable military leader

By G. Dunkel



A decisive moment: Giap at the founding of the Vietnam People's Army.

Gen. Vo Nguyen Giap, a hero and leader in Vietnam's struggle against Japanese, French and U.S. imperialism, celebrated his 97th birthday on Aug. 25. Nông Đức Mạnh, secretary general of the Vietnamese Communist Party, told Giap that he was "an elder of the Vietnamese People's Army who remained a wonderful example for the younger generations."

Besides Mạnh, other prominent leaders of the Vietnamese party and state also paid Giap a visit on his birthday, along with 30 foreign delegations.

Even his adversaries, like retired U.S. Army Lt. Gen. Harold Moore, who led a battle against troops Giap commanded in 1965, called Giap "arguably one of the greatest military commanders of the 20th century."

Using skills developed in his early career in the 1930s as a revolutionary journalist, Giap also described and analyzed the struggles he led. Two of his significant books in English are "Banner of People's War, the Party's Military Line" (Praeger, 1970) and "The Military Art of People's War" (Monthly Review, 1970).

Giap's parents were fairly well-off farmers from families who opposed the French colonialists then ruling Vietnam. In 1925 he joined a youth group opposed to French occupation. Giap did time in French prisons when he was 19 and joined the Communist Party. After his release, he completed his education and became a teacher, revolutionary journalist and agitator. In the late 1930s he was sent to China to work with Ho Chi Minh in organizing a revolutionary movement among Vietnamese exiles.

During World War II, Japan displaced France as the colonial power in Vietnam. Giap returned home in 1944 to organize against the Japanese occupation. After the August Revolution in 1945 that overthrew Japanese rule, Giap became interior minister in Ho Chi Minh's government.

But France began reoccupying Vietnam in the fall of 1945. The Communist Party decided that Vietnam needed an army. Giap was picked to form and lead it.

In a 2003 interview, Giap said the army's goal "was to lean upon military action as a way to organize the masses, produce a military effect beneficial toward revolution, thus developing and reinforcing the political stand of the Viet Minh." (Journal of Third World Studies) The Viet Minh were the liberation forces who fought the French colonialists and Japanese occupiers.

Giap said that within 48 hours of its founding, "my new army won two successive victories. The first was against the [French] post Phai Khat, the second was at Na Ngan," just 21 miles away. The intelligence agent who provided the information needed to attack Phai Khat was a 13-year-old named Hoang, while the attack on Na Ngan owed its success to "Duc Long, a man of the region."

Giap told his troops, "Be bold, quick and aim for certain victories." He followed this motto from the beginning of the Vietnamese People's Army until the offensive that led to Vietnam's liberation in 1975.

Giap led 100,000 troops against the French in the decisive battle of Dien Bien Phu in 1954. Another 100,000 Vietnamese workers, mainly women, provided logistics and carried artillery in pieces on bicycles or their backs, along with ammunition and food for the resistance troops.

The French colonial power was astonished by its humiliating defeat.

Concept of people's war

The Vietnamese people were able to produce such forces by relying on and developing "people's war," led by the Communist Party headed by Ho Chi Minh.

Giap explained people's war in a PBS interview aired in 1999: "It was a war for the people by the people. FOR the people because the war's goals are the people's goals—goals such as independence, a unified country, and the happiness of its people. ... And BY the people—well, that means ordinary people—not just the army but all people."

He avowed: "We know it's the human factor, and not material resources, which decide the outcome of war. That's why our people's war, led by Ho Chi Minh, was on such a large scale. It took in the whole population."

The U.S. provided a great deal of the funds and military supplies that France used before its last soldiers left Vietnam in April 1956. Washington supported the regime that the French left in place in south Vietnam and opposed the elections that were supposed to unite the country, elections that Ho Chi Minh, then north Vietnam's leader, would surely have won.

As the puppet regime in south Vietnam fell apart, the U.S. stepped up its direct military intervention, first with advisors and then with combat units in 1965. Its strategy was "escalation" until the Tet Offensive in 1968. The Vietnamese liberation forces carried out simultaneous, surprise uprisings in hundreds of towns and villages throughout south Vietnam, with commando strikes against the U.S. Embassy and major U.S. air force bases. The Tet Offensive turned the tide against U.S. forces in Vietnam.

Giap told PBS, "It was the American policy to try and escalate the war. Our goal in the '68 offensive was to force them to de-escalate, to break the American will to remain in the war. ... We did this by confronting them with repeated military, as well as political and diplomatic victories."

The U.S. lost 58,226 soldiers in its war against Vietnam and suffered a few thousand missing in action. This was more than enough to shred popular support for continuing the war.

Vietnam released figures on April 3, 1995, that a total of 1 million Vietnamese combatants and 4 million civilians were killed in the war. The accuracy of these figures has generally not been challenged.

Even with all these deaths, the U.S. could not break the will of the Vietnamese to wage a people's war for their national sovereignty and liberation from neocolonialism.

U.S. aggression against Vietnam, however, still continues in the form of lingering, terrible effects from Agent Orange, the herbicide spread over huge areas of south Vietnam by the U.S. Air Force. Even after three generations, 150,000 Vietnamese children suffer from physical and mental abnormalities caused by Agent Orange.

Long live Vietnam and its struggles!
Long live Senior Gen. Vo Nguyen Giap! □

Olympic prowess

What’s socialism got to do with it?

By Rosemary Neidenberg

Cuba is a small country. With only 11 million people, it ranks 138th in population in the world.

However, Cuba sent 167 athletes to the Beijing Olympics, making it 20th among the 204 participating countries.

And those athletes won Cuba 12th place in medals, outstripping every other country in the Western Hemisphere—except for the U.S., with a population of 300 million.

How did they do it? Under their socialist system, Cubans enjoy free health care, education and recreation facilities. Life expectancy there has risen from age 58 in 1959, the year of their revolution, to 78 in 2007. (UN Human Development Index)

But Cuba still lives in the looming shadow of the U.S., the world’s richest, most powerful and aggressive imperialist nation, which backed the brutal dictator overthrown by the Cuban people in 1959. Since then, Cuba has suffered U.S. politi-

cal and economic blockades; terrorist bombings of commercial air flights and tourist hotels; enemy night flights dusting crops with poisons, pests and diseases; U.S. millions annually directed at “regime change;” and 638 assassination attempts on its incomparable revolutionary leader, Fidel Castro.

The U.S. Olympic team, which was first in total medals and second (after China) in gold medals, included 33 foreign-born athletes. The U.S. government’s recognition of these athletes is in sharp contrast to its brutal workplace raids and deportations of other immigrants. (USA Today, July 18) Team USA also owes a “thank you” to the battle for civil rights of decades past. The absence of its many high-achieving Black and Brown members would have substantially diminished the U.S. medal number.

There are those—some in sorrow, some with a smirk—who note that in previous Olympics the Cubans achieved an even higher ranking. They were fifth in Atlanta

(2000) and ninth in Athens (2004), compared with 12th this year. In a recent article, Castro said that five Cubans who had been expected to win gold medals for their country had been lured elsewhere by big money. He noted that the Cuban Adjustment Act, the U.S. law that provides a special procedure for Cubans to become U.S. citizens, “encourages the theft of Cuban athletes.”

Speaking on sports in Cuba, he pointed out that “Cuba is the only country where professional sport is not practiced.” He spoke proudly of its great International School of Sports and Physical Education that has “graduated thousands of youths from Third World countries [and] presently accommodates 1,500 students absolutely free of charge.”

The success of Belarus at the Olympics is also noteworthy. A former member of the Soviet bloc still striving toward socialism, Belarus ranked right behind Cuba in 13th place in number of medals. The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea

shared 30th place with eight other countries, and was trailed by 49 nations, many richer and larger.

Cuba’s excellence in sports is also seen in the Pan American Games where it has an all-time medal count of 1,793, which is second only to the U.S. with its all-time medal count of 3,916. Anticipating those games in 2012, 2016 and beyond, how sweet will be the successes of Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Paraguay and other Latin American and Caribbean countries whose people want to follow the Cuban path. And certain it is that no one will rejoice more enthusiastically than the Cubans.

During the television coverage of the Beijing games a picture of Mao Zedong was often seen in the background—a poignant reminder of the Long March and the Great Chinese Revolution, without which there could be no Bird’s Nest, no Water Cube, no 110 gold medals, no unsurpassed opening and closing ceremonies—no People’s China rising to a world power. □

Poverty, not Gustav, brings deaths to Caribbean

By G. Dunkel

While Gustav was still a tropical storm, with winds less than 70 miles per hour but with heavy rain, it brushed by the Dominican Republic. It then strengthened to a category 1 hurricane—out of a possible 5—as it passed over southeastern and southwestern Haiti. It strengthened more as it passed over Jamaica and the Cayman Islands.

By the time the storm hit Cuba, it was a category 4 hurricane with 140-mph winds. In the western Cuban town of Paso Real del San Diego, gusts reached 212 mph, a new national record, according to a spokesperson at the Cuban Institute of Meteorology. (MSNBC.com)

It raged across Cuba’s Isle of Youth, then over western Cuba, but largely spared Havana and its 2 million people before heading north through the Gulf of Mexico towards the United States.

Of the 90 or so deaths reported in Gustav’s passage through the Caribbean, about 75 were in Haiti, eight in the Dominican Republic and eight in Jamaica. Not one death was reported in Cuba, though some people were injured by wind-blown debris.

The number of reported dead in Haiti may go much higher. “There are regions affected by the storm that our teams have not been able to reach,” civil protection director Alta Jean-Baptiste told reporters in Port-au-Prince, adding that most of the deaths occurred in Haiti’s southeast.

“The majority of victims died when their houses collapsed, or were killed by falling trees. Others drowned when they tried to cross swollen rivers,” she said. Mudslides, very common in Haiti’s deforested countryside, undoubtedly claimed a number of victims.

Haiti is by far the poorest country of those hit by Gustav. Even if the government wanted to do an evacuation, it doesn’t have buses to move people nor enough paved roads to accommodate the buses. And even if it had the roads and buses, it would need buildings to shelter and feed masses of people, something else Haiti lacks.

The more developed capitalist countries of the U.S. and Europe have deliberately punished Haiti’s economy ever since a

successful slave revolution there defeated French colonial rule in the early 1800s.

The majority of people in Cuba were also once very poor. But since its socialist revolution in 1959, Cuba has concentrated on the health and development of its people. Before the hurricane hit, it evacuated 250,000 people as a precau-

tion. Civil defense committees visit each household to announce an evacuation is coming, then come again to make sure everyone gets out safely, including the elderly and disabled.

Communities are evacuated together and know where they are going, so families can hook up and stay together.

Doctors in the community evacuate with their patients so they can guarantee insulin and other medicines are available.

Cuba suffered significant physical damage to its crops and buildings from this extremely violent storm, but as of noon, Sept. 1, no loss of life had been reported. □

Sat., Sept. 13 • Washington, D.C.

PROTEST 10 YEARS OF INJUSTICE!
ENOUGH IS ENOUGH!
FREE THE CUBAN FIVE!

10 am: Morning Rally, Malcolm X Park

12 noon: March to the White House

2:30 pm: Indoor Rally at SEIU Building

1800 Massachusetts Ave. NW, 1st Fl. Auditorium, by Dupont Circle

The Cuban Five are five Cuban men who are in U.S. prisons, serving four life sentences and 75 years collectively, after being arrested in September 1998 and wrongly convicted in U.S. federal court in Miami in 2001.

They are Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino, Antonio Guerrero, Fernando González and René González. They were falsely accused by the U.S. government of committing espionage conspiracy against the United

States, and related charges.

But the Five pointed out vigorously in their defense that **they were fighting terrorism** — they were monitoring the actions of CIA-backed Miami-based terrorist groups, in order to prevent attacks on Cuba.

The Five’s actions were never directed at the U.S. government. They never harmed anyone nor ever possessed nor used any weapons while in the United States.

On 9 separate occasions, the U.S. government has denied entry visas to Adriana Perez (TOP) and Olga Salanueva (BOTTOM) to visit their imprisoned husbands. It has been almost 10 years since they last embraced. Their visitation rights must be respected! For more information, visit www.thecuban5.org

National Contact Information:
www.sept13freethecuban5.tripod.com

Also see: www.freethefive.org • www.freethecuban5.com • www.nyfreethefive.org

Local Contact Information:
Contact local organizers for information on transportation to Washington, DC, and to volunteer
New York: 917.887.8710 • San Francisco: 415-821-6545 • Washington, DC: 202.340.5623

De El Salvador a los EEUU

Un viaje en apoyo a los derechos inmigratorios

Por Heather Cottin
Nueva York

José Mario Castellón Leiva, de 39 años de edad, salió de El Salvador en su bicicleta el pasado 31 de mayo. Desde entonces, ha pasado por Guatemala, México, y los estados de Texas, Luisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, Florida, Carolina del Sur, Carolina del Norte, Virginia, Washington, DC, Maryland, Pensilvania, Nueva Jersey y Nueva York, y actualmente se dirige rumbo a California con una misión; la de defender los derechos de las y los inmigrantes.

Castellón se mudó a los Estados Unidos en 1997 y trabajó como instalador de gabinetes en Dallas, Texas. Enviaba sus remesas a su familia en El Salvador. Una noche mirando la televisión, Castellón vio a un niño cuyos padres habían sido arrestados y deportados. “¿Quién va a hablar de parte de los niños? ¿Quién nos va a defender?” lloraba el muchachito.

La policía de Texas, colaborando con la Migra (Immigration and Customs Enforcement, ICE) estaba conduciendo redadas por todos lados. Hasta la fecha, se estima que ICE ha deportado a 286.000 inmigrantes este año y ha prometido aumentar la cantidad de redadas.

Castellón se convenció de que tenía que hacer algo. Siendo un ciclista a nivel



FOTO: HEATHER COTTIN

Mario Castellón en Nueva York.

nacional, que inmigró a los EEUU en su bicicleta, decidió que tenía que hacer algo para protestar la separación de miles de padres y madres inmigrantes y sus hij@s, una política que priva a esos niños de la seguridad y el cariño familiar.

Tomó un autobús para regresar a El Salvador y luego preguntó a su esposa Roxanna si él pudiera recorrer los Estados Unidos con un mensaje: ¡Alto a las redadas y deportaciones! ¡Alto a la destrucción de familias! Ella respondió que sí.

Aclamado en cada pueblo por donde ha pasado por inmigrantes que viven con el miedo a las redadas, Castellón se ha con-

vertido en un símbolo de la lucha contra lo que much@s llaman las tácticas tipo Gestapo del Departamento de Seguridad de la Patria.

Satanizad@s cada noche por los demagogos de los medios de difusión Lou Dobbs y Glenn Beck, l@s inmigrantes viven en una pesadilla de inseguridad.

“Monto mi bicicleta bajo el sol y bajo la lluvia por mi gente,” dijo Castellón. “Recorreré 10,000 millas más para que la gente sepa que éste es un crimen terrible. Siento que tengo que hacer esto para la humanidad,” dijo Castellón a Workers World/Mundo Obrero.

La codicia corporativa engendra pobreza y desplazamiento

Mario Castellón tuvo que salir de su patria porque el desempleo rondaba casi el 65 por ciento. Como las compañías estadounidenses han estado destruyendo la economía ya en declive de ese país, millones de pequeños y pequeñas agricultores han sido desahuciad@s de sus terrenos y se han marchado a las ciudades donde las maquilas, las fábricas de propietarios en el extranjero, pagan solamente \$25 a la semana. Lo que está pasando en El Salvador, está sucediendo en México, Senegal, Las Filipinas, y en todas partes donde el imperialismo está imponiendo su política de “mercado libre”. Y mientras

el capital se puede mover libremente a través de las fronteras, la gente no.

El heroico viaje de Mario Castellón ha sido relatado en la prensa latina en cada estado por el cual él ha viajado. Cuando llegó a Nueva York, la Coalición Primero de Mayo por los Derechos de Inmigrantes y Trabajador@s, le acogió con abrazos, y la comunidad salvadoreña en Long Island organizó una red de auspiciadores para respaldar su viaje y para apoyar a su hijo de cinco años en El Salvador.

Entonces es muy importante la lucha de Mario Castellón. “Conocí a un niño pequeño en Carolina de Norte que dijo que ya tiene un poco menos de miedo ‘porque alguien está luchando por mí’.”

El 22 de agosto en Detroit, Chicago, San Diego, San Francisco, Houston y Nueva York, activistas por los derechos de inmigrantes se manifestaron contra las redadas y deportaciones frente a las oficinas del ICE. Mario Castellón se unió a la acción de la Coalición Primero de Mayo en Nueva York con su bicicleta, preparándose para la próxima etapa de su viaje, la cual le llevará a Chicago. “Ya no me siento tan solo,” le dijo a Mundo Obrero. “Ahora sé que hay todo un movimiento detrás de mí.”

Las personas que deseen ayudar a Mario Castellón en su viaje o que quieren que les visite en sus ciudades, deben comunicarse con Carlos llamando al 516-582-2720. □

En el blanco por defender los derechos humanos

Abogad@s en Colombia buscan solidaridad internacional

Por Berta Joubert-Ceci

Colombia es el país más peligroso del mundo para los líderes sindicales. Sin embargo, muy poco se sabe sobre el sistema judicial y l@s abogad@s que defienden a las víctimas de abusos de los derechos humanos. Una vez que un/a abogado/a toma un caso de violación por los paramilitares o por el estado, él o ella se convierte en blanco de amenazas y hasta de asesinato.

Esto no sólo pone en peligro las vidas de l@s abogad@s y sus familiares, sino que representa una negativa real al acceso de representación legal para las víctimas, en un momento cuando las masacres por los paramilitares con el apoyo del estado están siendo descubiertas pero siguen quedando en completa impunidad.

Nuevas leyes y reformas están siendo propuestas por el Presidente Álvaro Uribe con el total respaldo y promoción de Estados Unidos. Esta transformación del sistema judicial colombiano hará aun más fácil el condenar a l@s activistas por los derechos sociales y humanos que se oponen a las políticas genocidas del Plan Colombia y del estado paramilitar colombiano.

La Asociación Colombiana de Abogados por la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos ha organizado una conferencia llamada Caravana porque las delegaciones visitarán y se reunirán con la gente no solo en Bogotá sino también en los centros regionales.

El Centro de Acción Internacional envió el siguiente mensaje de solidaridad a la conferencia:

Desde los Estados Unidos les enviamos saludos a las y los organizadores y participantes de la Caravana Internacional de Juristas que se realizará en Colombia del 25 al 29 de agosto.

Mensaje a la Caravana Internacional de Juristas:

Desafortunadamente no podremos estar presentes en este momento tan importante para exponer la situación que enfrentan los/as abogados/as colombianos/as. Particularmente aquellos/as comprometidos/as con la defensa de los derechos humanos y laborales en su país.

Sin embargo, una vez que la información reunida por la Caravana esté disponible, nos aseguraremos que esta sea diseminada ampliamente como nos sea posible en los Estados Unidos.

Hemos observado con horror, por medio de reportes escritos y audiovisuales, cómo los derechos humanos están siendo violados bajo la política de la llamada “Seguridad Democrática” que preserva los derechos de los violadores sobre los de sus víctimas. Cómo leyes han sido creadas como aquella que eufemísticamente se llama de “Justicia y Paz” pero que no ha traído ni Justicia ni Paz para la mayoría de los colombianos y colombianas, pero sí más impunidad para los sanguinarios paramilitares responsables de incontables masacres.

Cómo de acuerdo al testimonio del abogado Jorge Enrique Gómez, pasado Defensor del Pueblo en el Magdalena Medio, el lecho de muchos ríos en Colombia están cubiertos con los cuerpos de aquellos quienes hasta este día son parte de los miles de desaparecidos y desaparecidas, víctimas del terror estatal y paramilitar.

Desapariciones, desplazamientos, falsos positivos, asesinatos selectivos, arrestos ilegales, y tantas injusticias y violaciones que no han sido investigadas, ni los violadores han sido castigados. Esto es realmente una falta de justicia

También acusamos no solo a la administración del Presidente Álvaro Uribe Vélez, quien en abierta violación a los Principios Básicos Sobre la Función de los Abogados en muchas ocasiones ha acusado públicamente a los defensores de los derechos humanos de servir a la causa del terrorismo, sino también al gobierno de los Estados Unidos, que bajo el Plan Colombia ha financiado una guerra en contra del pueblo colombiano, con el pretexto de lanzar una guerra contra las drogas.

Queremos nuevamente saludar a las y los organizadores de esta Caravana, quienes con el riesgo que esto implica para sus vidas y la de sus familiares, han tomado esta tarea para el beneficio del pueblo de Colombia.

Solidariamente,

Ramsey Clark

Hon. Claudia H. Morcom, Jueza Retirada de la Corte de Circuito del Condado de Wayne, miembro de la AIAD (Asociación Internacional de Abogados Democráticos), Detroit, MI

Vanessa Ramos, Presidenta Asociación Americana de Juristas

Heidi Boghosian, Directora Ejecutiva

del National Lawyers Guild (Asociación Nacional de Abogados)

Jitendra Charma, Presidente, Asociación Internacional de Abogados Democráticos

Jeanne Mirer, Secretaria General, Asociación Internacional de Abogados Democráticos

Julie Fry Vice Presidenta Alternativa de la Asociación de Abogados de Legal Aid (Ayuda Legal) Local 2325

UAW (Sindicato de Trabajadores del Automóvil)

Jerome D. Goldberg, Abogado, Detroit, MI

Joaquina Rodriguez, Abogada, Texas Asociación Americana de Juristas

International Association of Democratic Lawyers (Asociación Internacional de Abogados Democráticos)